

Social Action Digest

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RISE FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM ABOVE MATERIALISTIC PLANE

The values of freedom and of responsible personal existence should be put up as the real challenge and the real ground of all the helpfulness that America can dispense to the world, asserted Dr. Charles Malik at the annual New York State Bar Association dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Jan. 31.

Excerpts from an address by Dr. Charles Malik,
President of the United Nations General Assembly

The emphasis on goods and gadgets alone makes America appear indistinguishable from the Communist realm, and people soon see the one as much committed to materialism as the other. They are mistaken therefore, those columnists, propagandists and politicians who harp on nothing but the material needs of the underdeveloped countries. It may be they do so because they themselves know only these needs in their own lives! There is certainly no harm, there is every good, in seeking an ever higher standard of living - provided that is not all nor primarily what one seeks.

The Communists have a vision and a philosophy of life; often the Westerners whom the underdeveloped peoples meet or read about do not attach much importance to ideas and philosophies and interpretations. The Communists are ascetics; often the Westerners whom the underdeveloped peoples meet or read about or see in the movies are fat votaries of the pleasures of life. The Communists supply an international fellowship, comradeship - well-knit, wonderfully organized, aiding one another, supporting one another, building up one another; there is no comparable Western

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SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST (published monthly, except July and August) presents applications of sound principles to the concrete problems of modern life, especially in economics, by printing excerpts of articles and speeches by well qualified experts. SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST hopes to stimulate intelligent discussions of vital topics and promote action to strengthen private enterprise system and the ideals of freedom in a democratic society.

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A Miracle in El Paso

William M. Hay

*No special formula
for ragged, screaming children . . .*

MIRACLES DO happen, even today. They are happening right now in our very midst—yes, in recreation—but they are not happening by chance or accident, or by a sudden stroke of Providence. This miracle, quite to the contrary, has grown from patience and perseverance, work and love, and by divine guidance, too. Starting Our Lady's Youth Center in El Paso, Texas, in November of 1953 was not accomplished by the usual simple rules of finding a suitable location with adequate building; setting up budget; installing necessary equipment, and hiring a staff of qualified directors; now you are in business. It was different, because all neighborhoods, like all people, are different. Each calls for some special, carefully drawn, and more carefully applied prescription. There is no special formula to serve as a simple solution to all ailments.

Father Harold J. Rahm, SJ, has certain regular assignments that would overburden the average layman. When, in mid-1952, he suddenly found himself located in a section of South El Paso, Texas, inhabited by the very poor, he found himself immediately submerged in extracurricular activities. Had he and his wonderful helpers realized what they would go through in providing recreation for this very poor slum area, they might have faltered at the very beginning. However, this is a miracle and miracles in the making do not falter.

How do we get to know a neighborhood, the people, their problems, their needs, their longings? Father Rahm spent months until he came to know these people of Latin-American descent. He learned to understand their dire poverty, their limitations, their small hopes; but, most of all, he learned to love them—without love there could be nothing.

He walked the streets and alleys, teeming with ragged, haggard, screaming children and scrawny stray animals—streets redolent of litter and waste of all sorts! Telling about his tours he said, "People appeared and disappeared through gaping holes in fences, through wet wash hung in patios and on stairway landings. Women chattered in Spanish and yelled at the children while performing household tasks without benefit of gas, hot water, or even running water."

Bicycle exploration revealed additional factors; the

language barrier; the realization that there are class distinctions even in slums. Roughly grouped, there were four classes of families:

At the top, there are those with a reasonably sober father who has a regular paying job. Some of these enjoy a car and TV set and have adequate food and clothing.

Next comes the family with good moral and social standards, handicapped by financial limitations.

Third is the large group of women and children deserted by the titular head of the family, for whom the mother's best efforts are inadequate to provide decent living conditions.

Last is the too large group of individuals with no resemblance to a family unit; no acknowledged father of the children who roam the streets, give trouble at school, form gangs, and fight the battle of survival. It is largely this group who come to Our Lady's Youth Center—some of the toughest incorrigibles in town.

"We started with baseball in the backyard of Sacred Heart Church," says Father Rahm, "This attracted so many youngsters from their games of 'stick ball' in the streets that we began to look for larger quarters. A ramshackle old building, unused for twenty years, was our prize discovery. All windows were gone; there was no heat, light, or water. All in all, it was a sorry spectacle; but it was large and centrally located.

"With the consent of the owners and help of one volunteer assistant and some of the neighborhood kids, we waded in. Generous friends of all faiths and civic interest provided materials and skilled labor. The building, after reconditioning, was painted. The yard was graded, paved, and provided with some equipment."

Father Rahm, with captivating enthusiasm, says further, "Our program follows no pattern. It has evolved naturally to meet the needs, grown gradually through these four and a half years as funds, personnel, and equipment would permit. No beanstalk this, for our Jack, but an edifice with a firm foundation.

"Much equipment and some personnel have been furnished by the city recreation department. Superintendent of recreation Robert Shipp has been a great help. The staff, paid and volunteer, now numbers twenty-five, the latest member a social service director, and will undoubtedly increase.



They came from filth and poverty, and needed love . . .

"The building provides table games, TV room, jukebox, library, art room, sewing and cooking facilities, three club rooms, photography and showrooms, besides auditorium, gymnasium, and office."

The program is not limited to the center. Leaders go out into various sections of the neighborhood, for it is quite large—actually several neighborhoods in one—to provide activities even in homes, where large enough.

The use of teen-age volunteers, constituting the bulk of the staff, is one of the excellent aspects of this program. Some volunteers put in long hours as leaders; others help plan their own teen-age programs. Many were originally problem children before they secured positive direction.

Approximately a thousand teen-agers and youngsters engage in the seven-day-a-week activities at the center and elsewhere. There are clubs for all ages and interests. Boy Scout troops that have won trophies; homemaking and sewing classes; art and photography; dancing classes and weekly dances with an orchestra; classes in boxing, wrestling, weight lifting and judo; fencing; English lessons; and indoor games.

There are weekly movies and classes in social doctrines. The center sponsors two weekly TV programs, and opens a radio station daily with a three-minute devotional. It publishes a weekly newspaper. Three orchestras originate at the center, one of which now plays professional engagements.

The building early threatened to burst at the seams, and the city council agreed to roping off the adjacent street from 7:00 to 10:00 P.M. There the children, with adult supervision, play hopscotch and foursquare, jump rope, play

softball, touch football, and box, and have lots of fun.

"New emergencies kept cropping up," Father Rahm continues. "As operational expenses grew, so did the . . . charity of individuals and organizations. The Spanish-speaking council of the Knights of Columbus has not only given us use of the building rent-free but paid the insurance and utilities. My speaking fees and personal services, of course, go into the center. Now part of our operational expenses are included in the United Fund in this, its first year, in El Paso. Contributions hereafter will go toward purchase of the building.

"Our Lady's Youth Center is here to stay and to serve. Over and above the pressure of administrative duties, the daily harassment of details, we strive to keep uppermost the concern for people. People are our business, particularly the youth, the adults of tomorrow.

"We try always to pour out love to fill the empty, bewildered hearts of the neglected, the rejected boy and girl. True, this love must at times be implemented with a big stick. We must keep everything under lock and key, and be ever alert for gang warfare. But our city police officials note a decline in delinquency in the slums of South El Paso. Our Lady's Youth Center is not fancy, but, rather, functional. We are proud of it. We are grateful for the divine guidance which we have enjoyed."

Is this a typical neighborhood? Well, hardly. Is there such a thing? Neighborhoods are all different; call for careful analysis. Is this a typical program? Perhaps; at least, in the sense that all good programs are adapted to serve the people of the neighborhood in which they live.

Does this sound like a church or a religious program? Well, hardly. This program is possible only through the cooperative effort of many people—volunteers who plan and play there, civic clubs who give materials and money, United Fund, city recreation department, police department, and many, many others. Without these combined interests and help, but especially without the hard work and determination of Father Rahm and his staff, this miracle would not have happened. With the same ingredients, it can happen anywhere. It must happen, again and again.

The greatest need today is to turn more realistically to neighborhood programs. Any individual, organization, or city can learn a helpful and meaningful approach to this vital problem by a close look into the story behind Our Lady's Youth Center—the miracle in El Paso. #

"Being Christians, we make no exaggerated claims for what society can do to help personality. We do not believe that people's actions are completely fixed by their environment. There is always some choice open, enough to make the difference between Heaven and Hell. But if our destiny is to develop our faculties to the full and to take a share in the work of creation, it is obvious that we can do this only in co-operation with others. We can grow up along with others, each helping the next. But we can never grow apart from them, for we stand on the shoulders of past generations, and live, learn, and work with and through our contemporaries. Personality grows through fraternity as well as through liberty and equality."

Internationale, or insofar as it exists, it often breaks down and people are left in the lurch.

It is therefore nonsense to say that in the peaceful competition with Communism all you have to do is to supply better goods and gadgets and more economic assistance. The challenge is much deeper than that. You have to have something of the dedication, the passion, the conviction, the faith in ideas, the asceticism, the international organization and the faithfulness to friends which the Communists so shiningly exhibit, to have any chance of competing with them.

The Strange Paradox

This is the strange paradox of the age: that the non-materialistic aspects of the system which knows nothing but matter are causing it to win, and the materialistic aspects of the system which knows much more than matter are causing it to lose.

The cause of freedom, my friends, is identically the cause of free institutions. Fundamentally these free institutions are seven: the family as the inviolate group unit of society; the free press, including freedom of expression in general; free political activity, including independent political parties; freedom of association, including inviolate clubs, societies, trade unions, circles of friends; free but fully responsible economic enterprise; the university as an independent citadel of truth; and the church in its absolute autonomy as the custodian of supernatural truth. It is these seven free institutions that make America.

The battle of freedom is the worthiest cause today, and those who have the honor of fighting it in their lives, for their countries and for the world, must speak boldly, profoundly, from the housetops, and with absolute conviction. (END)

THE FIGHT AGAINST UNION RACKETEERS ...



ACTU Members Arrested in Boycott of Racket Union Local

The climate has changed. Public interest in the cleaning up of racketeer union locals is on the wane, but the fight is not over, "Sweetheart contracts" still abound. There are always men ready to live off the exploitation of their fellow man. Catholic social action must be one of constant vigilance. The situation at PDQ illustrates this. The shop is composed of but 17 men, but their basic rights are just as sacred as the rights of a larger group of workers anywhere else. That underscores the basic difference between Catholic social action and the practice of Communism. The Communists are only interested when "the masses" are involved. However, when the rights of the few are trampled under foot, they are not interested, except to exploit the plight of the workers in their newspaper to advertise their subversive ideas.

Christian justice and charity demands that no worker should ever become a pawn either of the boss or a sell-out "labor leader". Until the time of such minimal justice, the ACTU will continue to be a witness - on the picket line, at the union meeting, in the labor school, and in jail.

The following case history is an excerpt, reprinted by permission, from THE LABOR LEADER, published by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, 327 Lexington Ave., New York 16, N.Y.

* * * * *

Six members of ACTU (Association of Catholic Trade Unionists) who were arrested on Jan. 31 for "distributing handbills" and "disorderly conduct", were acquitted before Queens County Magistrate Court on Feb. 11, Ash Wednesday.

They had been handing out leaflets at the PDQ Car Wash Company, Queens Blvd., New York, protesting against the racket local 224. The ACTU went to the PDQ Car Wash Co. to distribute leaflets describing the miserable conditions suffered by the

employees at PDQ. Earlier in January the workers at PDQ had asked the ACTU for help to free them from the exploitation of both the employer and Local 224.

The workers at PDQ were forced, among other things, to work a 59-hour work week for \$60 over a 7-day period. If it rained they would have to remain on the job without any compensation. They were not entitled to any sick leave or paid holidays, and had no medical coverage. None of the workers had ever seen the union representative or a copy of the contract. In addition no one knows the address of Local 224.

Johnny Dio's Home Local

This Local was the original Local that was used by Johnny Dio, convicted extortioner now in the Auburn penitentiary, to build up his paper empire. Local 224 was originally in the United Auto Workers, AFL, then the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, then the Allied Industrial Workers, and is now independent.

At 9 A.M. on Saturday, Jan. 31, the 6 ACTU members went to the PDQ Car Wash to advertise the plight of these workers - who were mostly Spanish-speaking. Handbills were distributed to prospective customers in hopes of effecting an economic boycott. PDQ puts out approximately 700 cars per day at a rate of 1 car every 50 or 60 seconds. On Saturdays the traffic through the company is at its greatest.

Boycott Effective

As soon as the ACTU members began distributing leaflets 5 out of 6 prospective customers drove away from the car wash service. The employer telephoned police and then had one of his "goons" come out to intimidate the ACTU members. A squad car arrived with a sergeant and 2 police officers. The sergeant notified the ACTU members that if they continued to hand out leaflets, summonses would be issued under the Administrative Code. After a phone call to ACTU Labor Defense Attorney Robert Moser it was learned that this section of the Administrative Code dealt with littering and distributing of those handbills that were of a commercial or business nature. There was no littering and as such the order did not apply to the leaflets in the possession of the ACTU.

ACTU Members Arrested

The ACTU members then were given summonses for distribution of leaflets and afterward arrested for disorderly conduct. They were ushered into a paddy-wagon and placed in the Elmhurst detention jail for 9 hours before being arraigned in Night Court in Manhattan. This was the first time in ACTU history that any member had been arrested. The 6 were released in custody of their attorneys, all from the ACTU Labor Defense.

ACTU Protests to Mayor

The ACTU President Joseph Herrman later in the week drafted a letter of protest concerning the arrest of the 6 and mailed copies to Mayor Wagner, Commissioner of Labor Harold Felix, and Police Commissioner Stephan Kennedy. In the letter Herrmann protested that the 112th Precinct "went out of its way" to prevent the peaceful distribution of leaflets to notify the public concerning conditions at PDQ.

During the week 4 Puerto Rican workers who were suspected of contacting the ACTU were fired by the employer. They were told that they were being laid off for lack of work. Four English speaking workers were hired to replace the laid off workers.

Return of the ACTU

The next Saturday the ACTU returned to PDQ - this time to throw up a picket line. The ACTU was well represented at the picket line with all of its officers and a number of the membership. There was no trouble from the Police Department that Saturday. The result was that practically no one entered PDQ Car Wash the entire day. (Since then both attorneys for the employer and attorneys for the Local have attempted to negotiate with the ACTU to settle this matter.) At the present time

the ACTU is trying to restore the rights of the workers. The ACTU feels this cannot be done under Local 224.

The Trial

The 6 members arrested appeared on Ash Wednesday at Queens County Magistrate's Court. The summonses were dismissed by the Judge on the grounds the actions of the ACTU did not violate the Administrative Code. The arresting officer's testimony brought out the fact that the 6 were not littering, creating a disturbance, nor obstructing traffic.

Summing up the lesson in PDQ, Daniel Schulder, Secretary-Treasurer of ACTU stated: "The moral of PDQ is that the role of the ACTU as an independent Catholic Action group is vital today. Until such racket locals like 224 are out of the picture and an honest local in, the ACTU will continue to be at PDQ and all the other PDQ's where the workers are victimized." (END)

PROPERTY IN THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT (2)

by Rev. Edward Duff, S.J.
Editor of Social Order

The first part of these excerpts appeared in the April number. Reprinted with permission from SOCIAL ORDER (3908 Westminster Place, St. Louis 8, Mo.), Jan. 1959, pp. 1-31.

Effect of Pension Plans

There is a new development that threatens to put the control of property in still fewer hands. This development is the growth of private pension plans.

Pensions paid by industry received a tremendous impetus from the government's wage policy during World War II. Under union pressure and with the acquiescence of the government the practice became general in the mass production industries. With the outbreak of the Korean War wage stabilization was again imposed. As a result, even non-union firms found themselves obliged to offer pensions if they hoped to retain their workers.

By the end of 1956 these private retirement funds amounted to \$30 billion, a sum larger than the federal government's reserves (\$22.5 billion) for its Old Age and Survivors Insurance Program. By 1975, it is estimated, the payments from the pension funds will begin to balance the incoming contributions. At that moment the assets involved may total as much as \$100 billion. A prodigious amount of money, to be sure, but more portentous still is the potential power exercised by such funds through their stock holdings. Of the non-insured pension plans 75% of these assets are so invested and, most commonly, in stock of the gigantic corporations whose profitable operations assure good returns. It is important to note, further, that 60% of these funds is in the hands of 8 or 9 New York banks who act as trustees and thus have power to vote the stock.

Such is the picture of the concentration of economic power in American society, but we must not forget that the American economy has the largest number of private enterprises, centers of economic initiative, of any country, that in addition to new farm owners over 200,000 new concerns are started on an average each year, that for the last 40 years the number of non-agricultural enterprises has been increasing faster than the population. Nevertheless, the characteristic feature of the American economic system is the giant industrial complex.

Cost of High Living Standards

It is absurd to see a conspiracy of power-hungry men as the explanation of this economic gigantism and oligopoly. The answer is simple: the American people have

freely chosen - indeed have worked hard to achieve - a standard of living whose existence requires an investment in structures, equipment and inventories of \$13,281 per employee in the average manufacturing industry. For heavy industry alone the investment is enormously greater, \$25,000 per employee for a steel mill would not be an exaggeration.

A rising standard of living is not easily achieved. Over the past 75 years the population of the United States has tripled and the labor force has grown even more. The income received by individuals after payment of taxes has tripled over the same 75 years. It was \$530 in 1880 and is now \$1,710, both figures being expressed in 1956 prices. When the family is considered, average disposable income rose from \$2,200 to \$5,300 in those years.



Although the average weekly hours of work per worker have gone down over the past 75 years from 63 to 42, our society now produces over 5 times as much in each hour worked as it did in 1880. "Productivity" is the explanation, but productivity supposes machines and machines are costly. A study of what it would have cost to build a single up-to-date factory in a selected industry in 1951 revealed that one would have to have from \$265 to \$665 million to go into the primary steel business, \$500,000 to \$2 billion to manufacture shoes, \$700,000 to \$3.5 million to mill flour, \$250 to \$500 million to make automobiles and at least \$6 million to manufacture fountain pens.

Research to improve the manufacturing process or to discover new products costs American industry at least \$8 billion a year. Research, expensive though it be, is not optional for firms determined to hold their share of the market. Research ingenuity is necessary not only to maintain a share of the markets but equally to meet the pressure of a growing population of consumers on the world's resources. A ton or a barrel or a cubic foot of raw material has to go farther, has to do more work than ever before.

Bigness Inevitable?

One person seemingly unworried about the size of General Motors is a man who has to do business with the company regularly, Mr. Walther Reuther. The head of the United Auto Workers recently told a British journalist:

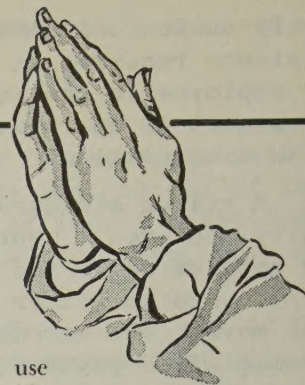
"I think, first of all, that you've got to recognize that big corporations, big industry, are inevitable, based upon our technology. You can have small companies in a relatively simple technical situation; you cannot have small companies in a period of automation and electronics and (down the road) the peaceful use of the atom.

"This old liberal concept that bigness is evil and that smallness is a natural virtue is a lot of nonsense. You can have small tyrants as well as big tyrants. Now, big labor is a by-product of the same technological facts of life as big industry is. You can't have small unions dealing with General Motors; you've got to have big unions, strong unions.

"The question is not: Do we want to escape from a world of bigness, big corporations, big unions, and big government? The question is: How do we live with bigness and make it responsive to basic human needs?"

For the health of our free society we should have a positive and energetic policy to encourage new enterprises. In agriculture we should effectively recognize the importance of the family farm. We must frankly admit, however, whatever our theoretical preferences for a regime of widely distributed property, that economic gigantism marks modern industrial society.

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Social Conscience

by KILIAN McDONNELL, O.S.B.

The examination of conscience which precedes confession should reflect this public social character of penance. Such an examination discloses many sins of omission as well as commission against the Body of Christ, the Church. It would go something like this: "I have been devoutly unconcerned about the salvation of my neighbor, hiding the spiritual cowardice under the guise of minding my own affairs. My business

practices are selfish and grasping and I salve my conscience by making generous donations to the building of churches.

"I lack any sense of dedication to the Church and my fellow men. I make only the efforts to be a good parishioner and neighbor which would be unseemly to omit. A well-fed respectability, urbane and gracious but definitely determined not to be disturbed by the needs of others, is my norm of conduct, rather than membership in the Mystical Body of Christ. I am not one my pastor feels free to call upon for help.

"I pay just wages only when I am forced to. I pay no attention to the conditions under which my laborers work and provide no opportunity for them to advance spiritually, culturally, and economically. In turn, I am unfair to my own employer. I use labor unrest

to extort unreasonable demands; I use unlawful means to attain reasonable demands. I do not give an honest day's work for an honest day's wage.

"With some diligence I have avoided studying the Church's social teaching lest it prove a source of embarrassment. I make no effort to form a social conscience in my children by providing them with good Catholic newspapers and magazines. Here, as elsewhere, I leave the education of my children entirely to the priests and Sisters.

"My stand on racial segregation is based on convenience and prejudice. My Catholicity lacks the missionary dimension and is parochial in the bad sense of the term. The world-wide mission of the Church arouses no interest in me and I do not support its efforts.

"My prayer is superficial, glib, taken up only with my own needs, and shows no apostolic concern for the great needs of the Church and society. When asked to enter some Catholic action I manifest my apostolic and social apathy by absolving myself through a monetary donation. I give money but I never give myself."

Our approach to the confessional might lose some of its mechanical formalistic traits if our examination of conscience were made in the light of the worship and social aspects of penance.

Compensating Institutions

Property... (continued from p. 7)

It is the contention of this article, that, despite the concentration of economic power following the mass production revolution, human freedom has been preserved by a complexus of legal restraints, the emergence of compensating institutions and the force of our political and cultural traditions. It is further suggested that, as a shield of political freedom, a guarantor of security and a stimulus to human development, these factors are a surrogate for the regime of widely distributed private property in land and tools as envisaged by Jefferson and the modern Distributists.

We are witnessing, it may be argued, the transition from a regime of property to one of power. As the distribution of property was essential for the freedom, security and development of the person, so a diffusion of power is required for the same reasons. It is being achieved in a tolerable measure in contemporary American society.

Restraining legislation, consumer preferences, group pressures and, most of all, the slow but persistent working of the American political tradition have created this equilibrium of power and give promise of maintaining it. (END)